Robin Lueck Laos data

SE ASIA

1 Stop 42 Laos Dong Dank 18 Km N.W.

Dense broad leaf forest near valley floor
dedajig stumps on side of rice paddy P. laotica
large tunnel running length of stump

2 Stop 44 Xieng Khoaang 3400' 18-VIII-60

On large pinus (?) tree in town 8' diam.
remnant of old forest
Colony under large bark flake

3 Stop 42 Ban Sheuong

bark crevices on bark
scrub forest in valley plain secondary growth

4 Stop 39 16 Km S. Tha Teng Plateau Bolovens

Edge of riverine forest in elephant grass
On bark, deep-seated coarse flakes, colony
retreat in crevices agyrothomia bolovénsis n. sp.

also Ptiloentoma large Agyrothomia with red pro.

(5) Stop 39 No I same niche different tree
deeper in forest P. bolovensis n. sp.

(6) Stop 39 No 3 same place
at edge of forest crotch surface
P. albifasciata n. sp.

(7) Stop 41 ~~Papaya bark in dry scar~~
~~in town~~ long dead tree, flaking bark
in town

(8) In town, planted row trees large

(9) 2 sp, one possibly Ptilo on large trees in town

(10) A13A Step 38 is ground, dried in town

(11) Wood mud from papaya trunk scar in town

Stop 27 Phan Rong

Open dry scrub - ~~tong~~ low, stunted growth sandy soil rock outcrops, heavily grazed. Tunnels in matted leaves ~~on~~ against rock 1" in diam. 6" deep. Retreat tunnels 8" recent short rain

Chute de Gongah

tree, flaky bark at top of falls
living trees Forest like Hatonga
Monsoon forest

Robin Leech,
% Mr. John Taylor,
U.S.O.M.
Amer. Embassy,
Saigon, Viet Nam.

near Phan Rang
on the coast, south
of Nha Trang.

June 22, 1960.

Dear Dr. Ross,

To date have taken some 10 spp. of Embioptera, all of whom are very different in size and colour.

The best time for collecting them was just at the beginning of the rain season. They were near the surface then. Now, with the rain, they dig down very deep. Yesterday I dug a pit beside a hole, and after digging down about 31 inches, the silk got so thin I lost track of the hole. Today I made up for it by getting two penultimate males & two females under some rocks in dense beach country.

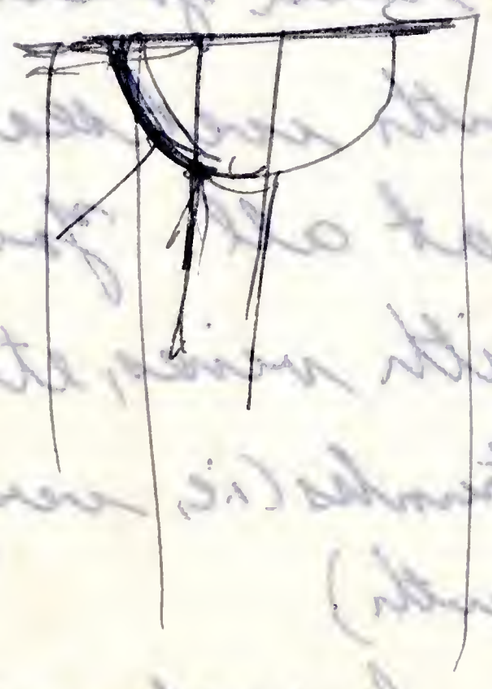
Much of the coast line of Viet Nam is desert-like in appearance, with sand dunes, scrub & desert forms of lizards. So far I've not seen any rain forest. There is a six month dry & a six month wet season; it's not like the Congo or Amazon basins at all. You do find a few thick patches of forest with vines, etc, but the ground is dry and so are the tree trunks (i.e, very little moss or lichen growth, but some orchid growth)

Many areas have been burned over & over, and very frequently; most forests are burned back to over a kilometre

or so from the road.

Will rear the embroptera out here, and try to bring the adults back with me in September.

Yours very sincerely,
Robin Leech



Robin Leech,
C/o Dr. Maynard Johnson,
U.S.O.M.
A.P.O. 152,
San Francisco, Calif.

July 11, 1960.

Dear Ed,

Rec. yours of June 30 today when I returned from a short trip to Tay Ninh (near Cambodian border, + on road from Saigon to Phnom-Penh).

There is a singular granitic mountain there about 3200 ft high, and relatively undisturbed. Many large trees + plenty of undergrowth. All rocks are huge - so big I can't turn or move them. Searched one whole morning there and couldn't find even a trace of Embioptera.

And speaking of Embioptera, I sent a package of them to you the other day. You should have them by now.

Will get you all the maps I can. If I go to the black market here, I can get military maps that are considerably more detailed than anything commercial.

Best season for ~~travelling~~ travelling here is in the beginning of the rainy season - i.e, best as far as roads, bugs + everything goes. During dry season, its really dry - you often push solid dust like flour that is ½ ~~cm~~ wheel depth deep. Also, at the beginning the dust is packed down just enough for comfort. The insects are in their greatest number - (see N.W. slopes of Mt. Kenya). Middle of rainy season is really bad unless the roads are paved - and there aren't many paved. At the end of the rainy season the insects again come out, but this time the roads are soggy + many bridges are out.

The other evening at Tay Ninh I had the coleman lantern out ~~for many~~ from 7:30 PM till 1:30 AM. - total catch - one small cicadellid.

II Leech 11.VII.1960.

Security is poor in Thailand, Cambodia, Southern part of Viet Nam & Laos. Cambodia and the adjoining Viet Namese border area are the worst. (see ref. TIME - July 11 - an article on Viet Nam) This article has made the "Time" magazine unattainable for this issue.

Roads between Cambodia, Burma & East Pakistan & India are said to be fair during dry season, but damn near impossible even for 6-wheel-drive Army trucks during the rainy (monsoon) season. There is a railroad running the length of Burma from Rangoon to Mandalay to Lashio, and apparently some sort of road from Mandalay to Comilla (Pakistan) The road can't be altogether impassible as a group of the I.V.S. (Int. Voluntary Service) boys are buying a ~~mo~~ Volkswagon Minibus (spelling ←) & going from Saigon all the way to Europe via Cambodia, Burma, Pakistan, India, Nepal, W. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq & Turkey.

Camping is not recommended in any of the security areas. Americans especially, as the commies enjoy killing anyone who is giving aid to the country they're trying to overwhelm.

Big trucks are often seen on the main roads, but rarely on the side roads. Most-often-seen trucks are Mercedes & Citroens. Very few American trucks - have seen two Mercurys and one Dodge, during two months.

~~Now~~ Late April, May & early June are your best collecting months.

Bout it for now. Would like to hear if the Embioptera I sent are of any interest.

Regards
Rokin.

(see next page)

TL Leech 11.VII.60.

For good maps of Asia, write:

John Bartholomew & Sons Ltd.
Duncan Street, Edinburgh 9,
Scotland.

Also consult Nat. Geographic Soc.

A friend here tells me that it is extremely difficult to get permission, even for scientific purposes, to travel in Burma. The road from Thai to Mandalay should be good but he cannot say anything after that. Burma is terrifically full of bandits and commies, and activity is increasing monthly. Not even trains run at night.

If permission is granted, the most suitable months for travel in Burma are November to April (incl.), for the other months are too wet.

The normal route taken by travellers is Imphal — Tamu — Kalewa — Ye U — Shwebo. — Mandalay — Meiktila — Toungoo — Rangoon. From Rangoon there is a road to the malayan border via Mergui which entails many river crossings. a practical from Burma to Singapore is from Meikila due east to the Thai border and Maesai, then south to Bangkok & Malaya

"Quote" "....the fact that the N.E. Frontier agency is closed to foreign travellers unless in possession of a permit, which is seldom granted, from the Ministery of External affairs in Delhi.

also" Journeys through Burma can only be made ~~from~~ under permit from the Burmese Govt, and these are seldom granted.

Best suggestion = write to: Automobile Association,
Fanum House, ~~Leicester~~ Leicester Square,
London, W.C. 2. England

and // Automobile Assn, // Rangoon, Burma.

Hope this info helps.
Robin.

Robin Leech,
c/o Dr. M.S. Johnson.
U.S.O.M., APO. 152.
San Francisco, Calif.
July. 25, 1960.

Dear. Ed,

Am now in Laos and about the same parallel as Tourane in Viet Nam. Am east of the Mekong River. If you can find Pakse on the Mekong, go due east to the Bolovens Plateau (see Nat. Geo. Soc. article on Laos, of 1959-60??) am at 3400' elevation in a mixed high-grass with riverine-forests area.

Have found three, possibly 4 spp. of Embioptera, including one dead ♂ found dead under a piece of bark. He has a black body + head with a red pro-thorax like those we got near Abercorn. The other live ones are all females with very small broods. All have established well in the tubes.

A special note. When I come through San Fran. on or about Sept 10-12, I will be stopping for a short time only at either San Fran or Oakland airport. When I do come through, I shall telegram both you and/or Dad to come and get the cultures. I will be heading for Washington + may be going to Antarctica directly. If so, then it will be best to give them to you while I'm in the area, rather than send them from Washington.

Hope you received the ones I sent from Saigon. There should be something of interest there. Only 2 of the ones I got here resemble the ones I sent you — the red-necked one and the large ~~♂♂~~ ♀♀ like those from Nha Bo, 14 Km. W. Phan Rang. (Please note "W." of Phan Rang") I made a mistake and put "E." on many labels; "E" would put you in the ocean. I changed all I found, but there's the possibility of missing one or two.

There are also embioptera in Pakse, but I was there only a few hours before coming here, so I didn't have enough time to collect + get organized for here at the same. I guess there's a possibility that those from Saigon are the C. saundersii as we found them from Mombasa to Lake Tanganyika

General collecting here is better than that in Viet Nam, even though this is the rainy season here, too.

Soil here is decomposed basalt (lava) The surface rock is like swiss cheese; the lower stuff, like found in creek beds is solid.

II Leech July 25/60

The soil is ~~dark~~ dark & rich; the trees are mostly smooth-barked, with a few very rough-barked ones about. the edge of the riverine forests yields more general insects & emboptera than does the heart of the forest. Rain every day; cool evenings here.

Animals - deer, buffalo, gaur, elephants, squirrel, rats, flying squirrels & plenty of tigres - big too. Roads, once off the main arteries are very poor & don't recommend them unless you have 4-wheel drive.

Paksé is 500± ft high & has some forest, though much of it has been cleared off for agriculture. at Km. 15 on the road going towards Saigon is a sizable forest with big trees. Mountains about Paksé are sedimentary as are the rocks in Paksé itself. Sandy soil with plenty of fine silt.

Will drop further lines as to what I find & where.

Regards,
Robin.

c/o Dr. M.S. Johnson
U.S.O.M., A.P.O. 152,
San Francisco, Calif.
July 27, 1960.

Dear Ed,

Received yours of July 18 today when I returned from the Plateau (Bolovens, see Nat. Geog. Soc. Jan. 1960). Am pleased to know that there was something of interest in the slat. I suspected O. saundersii, but I wasn't sure.

Today I spent a ½ hr. looking for Enhiopteva in Pakse and also 30 Km South on the road to Saigon (via Stung Treng + Kratie). The ones to the south were on a small stumps, and are possibly a different spp. than the ones from here in Pakse.

There are at least 4 valid spp. from those I got up on the Plateau, and all of those from the Plateau are different from those I got here today.

I think your plan to switch to a Land Rover for here is very advisable. If the roads we had in Africa, like those leading from the Mbisi forest near Aberom were poor, then these over here, in the rainy season, are terrible. In a country like Burma, where roads are known to be bad, I think it best to try to get there before the rainy season and do as much as possible before it comes. It would also be advisable to to get a winch hooked onto the front. We pulled ourselves out of 6 - 3 foot-deep holes today. Also, it would be best to have it lightly loaded, or else get two vehicles if there's to be as much stuff as we had in Africa. Land Rovers also come out in diesel, but even the regular gas engine is twice as economical on gas as any Willys Jeep affair. Also they are light but strong and wear well in rough country. Think about getting a fan to circulate air at your feet, as there is no air vent on the hood to bring air to your feet, as there is on Willys Jeeps. The window at your side ~~is~~ only opens about a foot wide, as it is a sliding, not a rolling-down affair. Be sure to get the "air cushion"

seats like we had for the driver in Africa. Either that, or use thick ~~flat~~ blankets to sit on + lean against. With an imitation leather seat you sweat easily in warm weather and all dust collects on the damp areas on your clothes. It makes you dirty fast, as well as being sticky.

I shall drop a line to these fellows who are going via Mini bus VolkeWagon + ask them to drop ~~to~~ you a line about travelling conditions.

Be prepared to pay high prices for gasoline in Malaya, even as much as 75¢-80¢. Food, be prepared to pay high prices, higher than those in the Congo, for tinned + stuff. Fresh vegetables, outside of Malaya, are none too common. Gasoline here costs about 65¢ a gallon and about $1.00 upcountry, away from the main roads. Prices in Vientiane are higher than here in Pakse.

All cultures are going well. Have got the system down pat now, after several cases of mould, but no direct losses. The best I find is some of the original silk, the thickest because of egg possibilities, and some solid pieces of dry bark wedged in with space between for tunnels. Tiny pieces of lettuce only, otherwise it goes bad if it is not all eaten before the next feeding.

Also sent Dr. Usinger some live Ceimex hemipterans. He says that they're the first live ones of these he has received + that he now has a culture going.

Best regards,
Robin.

at Xieng Khouang,
N. Central Laos.
9. VIII. 1960.
(See envelope for address)

Dear Ed,

Have already got results from stuff here in Laos. Have 16 male Emlicoptera comprising about 4 spp.

The altitude here in Xieng Khouang (pron. Zing Kwang) is 3450-3500 ft; the same as where I was on the Bolovens Plateau. Open grasslands, (low grass) with pine forests being quite common. Dense bamboo groves, and remnant patches of forest. In the towns are many very large remnant trees.

Have yet to find anything on the pine trees. The deciduous seem to offer the best selection.

Have taken a very-similar spp. of Emlicopteran here ~~to~~ — similar to one of those at this altitude on the Bolovens. Black body and wings; light ~~red~~ orange ~~tones~~ lines down the centre of back on meta- and meso-thorax; prothorax orange; occipital part of head orange; ~~and the~~ front of head is brown.

The other two spp. are about 8-10 mm long; one is light brown with a honey-coloured head; the other is much darker with a dark head. Both of these are from Pakse. Found one group on a papaya tree, the other in a gourd.

I have discovered that sometimes the female dies after the brood is hatched and doing O.K. This has happened on three occasions now. At first I thought it was negligence on my part, but now I'm not sure. Have 10 cultures going now, some extremely well — so well that I've harvested 11 males already.

Best regards,
Robin

Robin Leech,
c/o Dr. M.S. Johnson
U.S.Om. APO 152,
San Fran, Calif.
August 17, 1960.

at Xieng Khouang
N. Central Laos.

Dear Ed,

Have now 35 ♂♂ of the same critter, plus four females. The culture is quite healthy so I put in a few ♀♀ after your last letter noted that I'd taken a ♀ of something & that it was a new record.

Have found embioptera in 3 places between here and Xieng Khouang. We are about 20 kms from Xieng Khouang to the N.W. If you have a map, find X.K., then go N.W. until you find "Plaines des Jarres." Both these places are on the "Plateau de Tran Ninh" The plateau here is another one like the Plateau des Bolovens to the south.

I found an Embioptera yesterday that is probably the largest live ever seen. It is larger than any I saw in Africa. There were over 100 young in her nest. Her head is short, rather roundish, dull black. The rest of her is dark brown, with traces of white at each abdominal segment. In the centre of the abdomen, on dorsal side, there is a chalky-yellow streak. (This ♀ looks like others I've taken in this area, but she is 3 times larger) she is about ¾ of an inch long, not including the antennae. The young are an ~~dull~~ odd-coloured light-brown, that give no indication of their future adult markings.

Have taken a few Anthocorids in some of the nests. Also some of the small bees (?!) that I seem to remember you calling parasites on the Embioptera.

Recent and current troubles here have curbed our work to the point where we can't leave the immediate area. One sees & overthrows. One overthrows, the seconds objects & overthrows the first. Meanwhile, we get stuck. I sent some <u>films</u> to Usinger at Calif Univ., but the mail hasn't even left the base here. Unfortunately, I sent them one day too late.

Gressitt was planning to be here on August 28 or so, but if

II Leeds 17.VIII.60.

the current affairs don't clear up, he won't be able to get in (no planes are allowed in or out of Laos) and I won't be able to get out.

Reminds me of Africa, esp. the Congo.

Will bring all cultures in alive to S.F. when I come.

Best regards,

Robin.